

MCDHH NEWS



Jane Swift,
Governor

Robert P. Gittens,
Secretary

Kimberly S. Egan,
Commissioner

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We encourage reproduction of this newsletter and ask that our human service colleagues provide printed copies in their offices for their consumers and clients.

We welcome relevant contributions and announcements from other service providers and professional agencies.

Please send them to:

Jonathan O'Dell c/o
MCDHH

150 Mount Vernon Street
Boston, MA 02125

Budget Update

KIMBERLY S. EGAN, COMMISSIONER

The budget for this year began on July 1, 2001. MCDHH has an operating budget of approximately 6.46 million. The bulk of that is our annual appropriation by the legislature, which makes up 90% of that figure. The Massachusetts Assistive Technology Partnership, a cross-disability project, makes up another 6% of that total, revenue earned from our staff interpreters makes up another 3%, and a small inter-agency agreement with the Department of Public Health for communication access for substance abuse settings makes up the remaining 1%.

The budget cuts for this year came in two phases: a loss of supplemental funding for our move of the Boston office to Dorchester, which effectively resulted in a \$300,000 shortfall. The second came when the legislature issued the budget in November. It contained another \$400,000 cut, approximately 7% of our budget. The combined effect of the cuts to our operations has been severe:

- Layoff of three positions; reduction in the hours worked by four staff; three other staff took advantage of the Governor's early retirement incentive package and retired
- Reduction of our direct service contracts with DHILS by \$69,000
- Termination of three contract interpreters and reduction of money for remainder
- Reduction of outreach, printing, display and exhibit funds
- Termination of evaluation screenings of interpreters not yet certified
- Elimination of dollars reserved for a CART mentoring project which would have increased the pool of trained CART providers
- Elimination of the Interpreter and CART community service fund which translates into no communication access services for support group meetings
- Elimination of a pool of money used for short term communication access services
- Reduction of the assistive technology fund for hard of hearing clients which translates into effective cessation of financial assistance of last resort for assistive listening equipment and signaling equipment
- Reduction of funds available for emergency interpreter services; and
- Reduction of every other available administrative expense that we could find

MCDHH was, by no means, the only human services agency affected by the budget

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COMMISSIONER SEARCH

APRIL SPENCER

Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert P. Gittens, who has at every turn showed his sincere interest in the issues and needs of the Deaf, late deafened and hard of hearing citizens of Massachusetts, took the unusual step of inviting representatives from these constituencies to talk with him about what they felt the necessary qualities of any future Commissioner should be.

Participants in this meeting were quite frank about expressing themselves. One participant later commented, "I said the Secretary's job was easy. All he has to do is look for God's right hand man/woman".

Other sentiments expressed: the Commissioner should be "creative during hard financial times", be "able to butt heads", "should

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

JEANNINE DUSOMBRE, GENERAL COUNSEL

BILL NO.	UPDATE:	SUMMARY
<u>S 227</u> now <u>S 2168</u> (Sen. Antonioni)	Bill referred to the committee on Senate Ways and Means	Provides for attorneys to represent certain children with disabilities and their parents.
<u>S. 230</u> (Sen. Antonioni)	Bill referred to the committee on Senate Ways and Means	Further defines the term <i>free appropriate public education</i> (FAPE) so as not to permit any changes in the program, placement or services with the adoption of the FAPE standard. As of January 02, the State standard of "maximum feasible benefit" changes to the Federal FAPE standard.
<u>S 686</u> (Sen. Montigny) New Draft Substituted: <u>S. 2218</u>	In January 02, the Committee on Human Services and Elder Affairs substituted a new draft of the bill (<u>S. 2218</u>). On 1/8/02, bill was passed (33-0) and engrossed in the Senate and sent to the House for further action. Bill is currently in the House Committee on Ways and Means.	Establishes a family support program within the Executive Office of Health and Human Services for human service agencies to provide support to individuals with disabilities and their families.
<u>S 735</u> (Sen. Brewer)	Currently in Senate Ways and Means	Provides insurance coverage for the cost of two hearing aids every three years.
<u>SB 759</u> (Sen. Moore)	Currently in Senate Ways and Means	Requires insurance providers to pay for the costs of providing competent interpreter services.
<u>SB 1585</u> (Sen. Morrissey)	The Committee on Senate Steering and Policy reported to bill favorably and on 09/13/01 was ordered to a third reading	Allows access for people raising or training Service Dogs to assist people with disabilities

Regulation Update:

The Commission has re-issued regulations at 112 CMR 6.00 relating to CRIMINAL OFFENDER RECORD CHECKS as emergency regulations. The proposed regulations require Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) checks for all employees, regular volunteers or trainees or other persons who provide client or support services in programs or facilities of the Commission, or in any vendor agency programs funded by the Commission. The need to re-issue the regulations was necessary due to a lawsuit settlement. The Settlement mandated that some language in the original regulations needed to change to better protect people affected by the CORI requirement. MCDHH is also working on updating its regulations for interpreter rates.

Other News:

1. The State Department of Education (DOE) issued an Administrative Advisory (SPED 2002-1):

Guidance on the change in the special education standard of service from "maximum possible development" to "free appropriate public education" ("FAPE") which became effective January 1, 2002. The Advisory explains the Massachusetts special education law changes in the special education standard of services, from "maximum feasible benefit" to the federal standard, which is "free appropriate public education" ("FAPE"). The changes are effective as of January 1, 2002.

It can be found at the Department of Education web site at: www.doe.mass.edu/sped/2001docs/adminadvis02_1.html

2. On the Federal level, the "Ticket to Work" and "Work Incentive Improvement Act" Program for clients of the Social Security Administration (SSI and SSDI) beneficiaries. The "Ticket to Work" Program provides a "Ticket" to SSI and SSDI beneficiaries. The Ticket may be used to obtain rehabilitation and employment services from Employment Service Providers. The Ticket program is voluntary for individuals with disabilities. People with disabilities who received a Ticket may use the Ticket to attempt to work, get training or other types of employment services. Massachusetts SSI and SSDI beneficiaries began receiving Tickets in February. Tickets will be phased in through June 2002.

DISCOVER THE GREAT OUTDOORS O.E. STAFF

Outdoor Explorations (OE) brings together people with and without disabilities for outdoor adventures. Our programs challenge people to overcome preconceived limitations about themselves and others, develop outdoor skills, build relationships with people of different abilities, and cultivate an appreciation for community service and the environment.

OE programs include kayaking, backpacking, whitewater rafting, rock climbing, sailing, cycling and snowshoeing. To sign up for programs or to learn more about us, visit our website www.outdoorexplorations.org or call 781.395.4999.

ASL Led Introduction to Kayaking, Saturday, July 13, 2002

Outdoor Explorations (OE) will teach you the basics about kayaks, equipment, and paddling strokes. You will then have the opportunity to practice paddling techniques and "wet exits" all while enjoying yourself in Marblehead Harbor, Marblehead, MA. Come away from this clinic knowing how to plan and prepare for your next kayaking adventure. The program will be lead by a Deaf instructor and American Sign Language interpreters are available for hearing participants.

Instructor: Sanjay Gulati

OE staff: Jennifer Burns

Interpreters: Cory Meyer and Diana Doucette

Cost: \$50 (space is limited!)

ASL Led Backpacking Adventure, Friday-Sunday, September 20-22, 2002

Enjoy the fall foliage with people of all abilities while exploring the

magnificent Berkshires. Spend three days backpacking and building friendships with an inclusive, diverse group of people. Worried about not having the right equipment? OE can provide all the necessary items. The program will be lead by a Deaf instructor and American Sign Language interpreters are available for hearing participants.

Instructor: John Wilcox

OE staff: Tommi Mann

Interpreters: Christopher Robinson and Cory Meyer

Cost: \$225 (space is limited)

Outdoor Explorations

98 Winchester Street

Medford, MA 02155

Phone 781.395.4999 Voice

TTY 781.395.4184

Fax 781.395.4183

www.outdoorexplorations.org

WHAT'S NEW AT MCDHH

JAMES F. O'DONNELL, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER
YVONNE DUNKLE, DIRECTOR, CASE MANAGEMENT.

Department of Interpreter and CART Services

Stephanie Clark, Director of Interpreter and CART services, resigned from MCDHH to pursue other career opportunities. We thank Stephanie for her time with MCDHH and wish her the best of luck.

The two distinct functions of the department are being handled by their respective supervisors: Karen Higgins for Referral and Lillian Garcia for Interpreter Services. Deputy Commissioner James O'Donnell has assumed the overall direction of the Department until such a time as Ms. Clark's position is filled. This may not take place until July 1st at the earliest due to budgetary constraints.

Meanwhile, the department has been actively implementing its part of the agreement with the Massachusetts Department of Education. Contracts have been issued for:

- Survey of educational interpreters
- Consulting by Kevin Williams from Boystown on the EIPA (Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment) they developed
- Peer development and support for educational interpreters

- Revising the educational guidelines for deaf and hard of hearing children.

This year is the first phase in a multi-year approach to upgrading the quality of the education deaf and hard of hearing children receive from Kindergarten to 12th grade. The department has also been working on several other concurrent issues:

- Encouraging interpreters to finish their mentoring program to become qualified legal interpreters.
- Working with the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf on referral issues
- Consulting with local hospital referral services for better coordination.
- Increasing the fill rate for emergency services

Department of Case Management and Social Services

We are hopeful that we have finally filled the Case Manager position in the Northeast region, vacant so long, by offering the position to a qualified candidate who hopefully, can start in June. Last fall, the Western regional Case Manager position was transferred to the Berkshires after Commissioner Wood heard of the dire need for services in that area. The Lead Case Manager position, for budgetary reasons, has been converted to a Case Manager position for the Western region to replace the one lost to

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the Berkshires. This position will be activated when the staff person returns from maternity leave. For the time being, a rotating system has been set up for coverage for both the Northeast and Western regions with our current case managers. Because of the short staffing we may respond to the service needs of our clients slower than usual. However, we always strive to provide quality services for all our clients.

Major projects of the department :

1. Department of Education (DOE) has the goal of improving education for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students, and developing guidelines for the education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students in the Commonwealth. As well as assuring that teachers are qualified to communicate with these students in the language that is most accessible to them. The Children's Specialists are involved in this process and revising the guidelines in meetings on this process;

2. Department of Public Health (DPH) on Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Board: the Children's Specialists have been actively involved in projects and training programs. They have also been guest speakers at various venues with audiologists who are involved with the Newborn Infant Screening process present. Some recent activities included meetings with the DPH regarding reaching parents of newly diagnosed Deaf and Hard of Hearing infants. One successful result of these meetings is that DPH has developed a form for audiologists to complete when they have referred recently diagnosed babies to MCDHH Children's Specialists;

3. Executive Office on Elder Affairs (EOEA) has a federal grant to develop three regional caregiver training centers for those persons who provide care for Deaf or late Deafened elders. These caregiver-training centers will be comprised of a 5-day a week day care center for Deaf elders with supervised care in educational and recreational setting. The centers will contain a Caregiver Resources Center that will provide training, technical assistance, and hands-on education to those persons who are providing care to Deaf and Hard of Hearing elders.

4. Walden School at The Learning Center for Deaf Children (TLC) received a grant the federal Government's Health and Human Services Department. The ultimate goal of this is to bring people together who are stakeholders in the lives of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children who are severely emotionally and behaviorally disturbed. These stakeholders will work to build consensus around the needs of the children and their families and to provide preventive services for them as well as therapeutic. The good work continues! ;

OUTREACH AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES JONATHAN O'DELL

As readers of the previous MCDHH News know, the CATTS Department was especially hard hit by voluntary layoffs and early retirement, losing approximately 50% of its staff. Among those who left was our talented Webmaster, Chris Porter, whose absence has been especially keenly felt due to the specialized skills he possessed. Fortunately, the architecture of the web site he built was such that Jonathan O'Dell, Director of the CATTS Department, was able to take over and—after some initial hiccups—expand and improve some of the content on the site.

The Assistive technology section has been almost completely revamped, and live links have been added to all vendors and manufacturer's contact listings to simplify use. The page dealing with Assistive Listening Systems has been completely rewritten, as has the page dealing with Using a TTY and that covering the Cost of Auxiliary Aids and Services. A new page dealing with Hearing Aids was added, and Karen Rockow's popular book (developed under a contract with MCDHH) " A Guide for people who Become Deaf or Severely Hard of Hearing " was placed on the web and has been one of the most popular downloads. Numerous other pages were also updated.

The "Abridged Online Self-Training" has also become quite popular, distilling some very basic information about communication access into a short PowerPoint presentation that can be viewed on the internet. We hope to be able to expand the concept to include other short 'presentations'

geared towards specific audiences, so that entities who have great difficulty gathering their staff for a live presentation can at least obtain some training online.

The Hearing Loss awareness posters are quite successful, and we are redoubling our efforts to have them distributed to local libraries, museums, hospitals, senior citizen centers, and other such places where we believe they will be best utilized.

Since we no longer publish the News in print due to cost cutting measures, we cannot very well continue to offer it as a free service. Instead, we are asking respondents to the poster reply card simply to send us their name and address and indicate whether they have e-mail so we can contact them to let them know when the new online version is posted.

Finally, HRD approved the hiring of a part-time Communication Access Training Specialist for the CATTS Department, recognizing the need for continuing outreach and training, and interviews are expected to commence in the near future. Hopefully, this position will be able to alleviate some of the pressure on the department's remaining training staff, who are dealing with an ever-increasing number of training requests from throughout the Commonwealth while still striving to produce first-rate information and resources. ;

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shortfall. The funds that we receive from DPH, which pay for communication access services in substance abuse settings, were depleted in January. This means that there are no interpreters or CART services available for AA, NA, and Al-Anon meetings. We are trying to work with the Department of Public Health in advocating for the restoration of those funds, in addition to our own funds.

So, what are we left with? With all that has happened this year, we have lost approximately 9 positions or one-sixth of our total statewide workforce. Of our total appropriation from the legislature, 55% goes toward payroll and related expenses; 26% toward deaf and hard of hearing independent living center contracts; 8% toward rental costs; 6% is used for our other direct services and outreach, including the AT fund, communication access services, database development, printing and exhibits. The other 5% is divided among the agency's other somewhat fixed operating expenses, which include postage, supplies, equipment leases/maintenance, and similar costs.

In other news, the Fiscal Year '03 budget released by the Governor's Office in January recommended a further reduction of the MCDHH budget for the coming fiscal year over the amount of \$200,000 or approximately 4% of our total operating budget. A few weeks ago, we then heard that the Governor's staff decided that their initial revenue projections were too high and they needed to trim next year's budget even further. We, along with our sister human services agencies, were asked to take another 2.7% cut. For MCDHH, that means another \$145,000, for a total of \$345,000, which would amount to almost 7% of our total remaining budget. It is not hard to envision what implementation of these cuts would mean given that we are

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NEW BOATING RESTRICTIONS ANNOUNCED JONATHAN O'DELL

In response to the attacks of September 11th, 2001, and in light of the very real danger of further terrorist activities, our government has taken steps to ensure that obvious targets of such activities be protected from the likelihood of potentially catastrophic destruction. Deaf and hard of hearing boaters should be particularly aware of the new United States Coast Guard NVPZ (Naval Vessel Protection Zone) regulations which are slated to go into effect June 15th. These regulations implement the creation of several tiered safety zones around naval vessels, and commanders of such naval vessels may use lethal force to protect themselves should any watercraft deliberately breach these zones with the possible intent of doing harm.

The following information was copied from the USCG home page at www.uscg.mil:

"DETAILS EXCERPTED FROM THE PERMANENT REGULATION:

- A U.S. naval vessel is any vessel owned, operated, chartered, or leased by the U.S. Navy; any pre-commissioned vessel under construction for the U.S. Navy, once launched into the water; and any vessel under the operational control of the U.S. Navy or a Combatant Command. As a result, the establishment and enforcement of NVPZs is a function directly involved in and necessary to military operations and the safety and security of naval commanders and personnel.
- All vessels within 500 yards of any large U.S. naval vessel (greater than 100 feet) must operate at the mini-

mum speed necessary to maintain a safe course and proceed as directed by the Navy or Coast Guard patrol enforcing the zone.

- Vessels are not allowed within 100 yards of a large U.S. naval vessel, unless authorized by the Coast Guard or Navy official enforcing the zone.



- Vessels requesting to pass within 100 yards of a large U.S. naval vessel must first contact the official patrol on VHF-FM channel 16 to obtain permission.

- Under some circumstances, the official patrol may permit vessels that can only operate safely in a navigable channel to pass within 100 yards of a U.S. naval vessel in order to ensure a safe passage in accordance with the Navigation Rules

To further assist the public, the Coast Guard established a Maritime Safety Line, 1-800-682-1796, which is now available to provide both commercial and recreational mariners with the latest, up-to-date information on local waterways and ports openings, closures and restrictions along the eastern sea-

board, Great Lakes, and Gulf of Mexico. This information is also available online at: <http://www.uscg.mil/safeports/>

Editor's Note: MCDHH has contacted the USCG to inquire about their operating procedures in case a boater does not respond to repeated failings, as might happen were the boater to be Deaf, hard of hearing or late deafened.

BUDGET TRACK...

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already operating on the proverbial shoestring and have made cuts in every conceivable area we could think of to minimize service disruption or suspension.

MCDHH has been deeply affected this fiscal year and needs your support. In 1999 the collaborative efforts of MCDHH, MRC and MCB resulted in a strategic plan called the Agenda for the Future, which called for a significant expansion in funding to establish adequate levels of staffing and service to meet the increase in demand from consumers and clients. As it stands now, expansion is out of the question; we need your support just to safeguard the gains we have made over the past sixteen years of MCDHH's existence to ensure that MCDHH and the services and programs it funds continue to remain a viable resource for the citizens of the Commonwealth.

We continue to monitor the budget process very closely and will continue to seek ways to minimize the impact on direct services. Regrettably, we do not expect to be able to fund any new programs, such as CART Mentoring, in the next fiscal year. It will be difficult enough just to keep those services we already have. |

COMMISSIONER SEARCH...

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lead by example...[possess the] ability to inspire people", be "able to work with the various communities and open to change".

Participants were very complimentary of Secretary Gittens. One later said that "I greatly respect Secretary Gittens for hosting this meeting. This demonstrates his concern that the right steps be taken to ensure MCDHH remains in the proper hands, with community support....This is a very important step for MCDHH at a very trying time. I feel the appointment of such a position needs to be handled carefully as the Commission will need the support of the entire community to pull through this situation." Another participant added "I was pleased with the way the meeting went..."

Secretary Gittens is a very impressive leader. He was honest and direct with us about what we wanted and made us feel heard."

As outgoing Commissioner Wood stated in her farewell address, MCDHH and the Deaf, late deafened and hard of hearing citizens of Massachusetts are fortunate to have Secretary Gittens at the helm of EOHHS during this tumultuous time. |

Editor's Note: Interviews for the Commissioner's position are currently underway.

CONTACTING US

Our move to 150 Mount Vernon Street seems to have generated some confusion as to which of the several fax numbers are connected to which departments. Regrettably, this has led to faxes being viewed by people other than the intended recipients, and in rare cases to faxes being misdirected or misplaced. Our correct fax numbers, by department:

Commissioner's Office:
617-740-1810

Administration & Finance:
617-740-1830

**Department of Interpreter and CART Services
(for interpreter/CART requests):**
617-740-1880

**Communication Access, Training and Technology Services
(technical assistance, training requests):**
617-740-1699

Department of Case Management and Social Services (referrals and relevant consumer/client documents from other service providers)
617-740-1850

Our e-mail: MCDHH.Office@state.ma.us
Our URL: <http://www.state.ma.us/mcdhh>

Our Telephone Numbers:
1-800-882-1155 and 617-740-1600 VOICE
1-800-530-7570 and 617-740-1700 TDD